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LETTER DATED 5 MAY 1995 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CROATIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to inform you, upon instructions from my Government, that the situation in the formerly occupied Croatian territory of western Slavonia is calm, and that peace and order have been restored. Representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the international media and diplomatic corps were allowed into the area as soon as it was secured. Complete freedom of movement of the United Nations Confidence-Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO) - previously restricted for their own safety - has been restored.

Today, the Zagreb-Vinkovci railway line has been reopened, the radio station at Okučani has begun operating and elementary schools are continuing their educational programme. Health, medical and social insurance has immediately been extended to all citizens in western Slavonia. As an act of confidence-building, the Ministry of Social Services of Croatia has today appropriated a one-time financial grant to help all persons in need in the liberated territories. The Ministry of Reconstruction is preparing grants and loans for the rebuilding of destroyed property.

Regarding the preventive and temporary deployment of Croatian army personnel into the zone-of-separation in other sectors, we reiterate that this was prompted by the build-up of local Serbian paramilitary forces in the occupied territories. Following the terrorist attacks on Zagreb it was necessary that any further threat to population centres and civilians be deterred, especially in the areas of Zadar and Šibenik south of Sector Knin. The Government of Croatia reiterates that it has no intention of escalating the conflict. If we wanted to act, we have had ample opportunity to do so in response to the attacks on Zagreb. On the contrary, we remain committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict through negotiations under the auspices of the international community, aimed at the peaceful reintegration of the occupied territories with the rest of the Republic of Croatia.

After the Cessation-of-Hostilities Agreement was reached, my Government immediately began implementing its terms and made arrangements for the surrender of the paramilitary forces in western Slavonia and provided them with the opportunity to leave the territory of Croatia if they so wished. However, at that time, some members of the international community mediation efforts circulated the idea that the surrounded Pakrac pocket should be given a status similar to that of "safe areas" in Bosnia and Herzegovina. My Government is of the firm view that this caused the surrendering forces in and around Pakrac to reconsider their decision to surrender and, instead, to resume fighting. The actions of paramilitary units resulted in two deaths and three injured in the police force, of the officers who were preparing to disband those units. This forced the police and territorial defence forces to disengage the resurgent attacks.

Presently, the disbanded members of the paramilitary forces are being questioned by law-enforcement authorities, in the presence of UNCRO. With regard to the approximately 600 members of those forces, the Abolition Act will be applied after they have been cleared of any allegations of war crimes. My Government has legitimate reason to believe that members of the paramilitary forces who were in the area are not entirely of the local population, but some have come from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the "Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)".

Civilians from the area have been temporarily moved into hotels and other accommodation in the towns of Varaždin, Krapina and Novska, to provide them with shelter and other necessities until full normalization of living conditions in the Pakrac area is achieved. More than 3,000 Croatian citizens of Serbian nationality have so far decided to remain in their towns and villages. All persons in the liberated territory have on numerous occasions in the past several days been invited to remain in their homes by my Government. Should any of them wish to leave the area and to go to any other part of Croatia, or to any foreign country, the Government of Croatia will cooperate with international agencies in order to facilitate this.

My Government expresses its dismay that the Security Council has accepted serious accusations against the Republic of Croatia of widespread human rights violations committed against the Serbian population in the liberated territory. These unfounded and unsubstantiated reports, provided by Under-Secretary-General Chinmaya Gharekhan, have been refuted and shown to be completely false by European Union Monitoring Mission observers and representatives of foreign media. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Yasushi Akashi, has toured the area, and confirmed that the Croatian citizens of Serbian nationality in the area have been well-treated by the Croatian police.

My Government also deplores the reports of looting by "governmental and quasi-governmental" organizations. The attempts at looting of abandoned civilian properties by civilians have been dealt with and the same offenders have been apprehended.

In this regard, the Republic of Croatia demands that Under-Secretary-General Chinmaya Gharekhan present accurate information to the members of the

Council and issue an apology to the Government of Croatia for some of his previous statements that have been proven untrue.

I would kindly request your assistance in distributing the present letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ambassador Mario NOBILO
Permanent Representative